

9-1-1 Frequently Asked Questions

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Does It Have To Be An Emergency To Call 9-1-1?

When you need a response from an emergency service, dial 9-1-1. This means if you need a police officer, the fire department, or an ambulance to come to you as soon as possible, you should dial 9-1-1.

Why Does The Dispatcher Ask Me So Many Questions?

Police/Fire/Medical Dispatchers follow a predetermined set of questions/protocols. Based on your answers to these questions, we can determine the best response/level of care for you. For example, a heart attack will elicit a different response level than a broken arm, and a trash can fire will elicit a different response than a house fire.

Can I program my home alarm system to dial 9-1-1?

No, by law automatically activated dialing and annunciation systems are prohibited from calling 9-1-1. The law requires access to the system to be initiated by a person. Your home alarm must go to an alarm monitoring company who will contact the Dispatch Center.

What if I don't speak English?

9-1-1 systems in the State of North Carolina provide for immediate translation services for all languages. Additionally, Moore County Dispatch has access to Language Line services providing translation for over 140 languages.

What if I can only communicate by TDD or Computer?

Moore County 911 Dispatchers are equipped with TDD (Teletype Device for the Deaf) detectors and can communicate with TDD's from their 9-1-1 workstation.

Is my call to 9-1-1 confidential?

Callers to 911 are not required to give their name/address/phone number to the dispatcher. You will never be forced to give your personal information. However, please keep in mind there may be times when officers/dispatchers require additional information from you after the call is disconnected (ex: more specific information to identify a location or update information that will affect an officer's response). This is the main reason you will be asked to provide your name and call-back number. If you choose to remain anonymous, it will not change the officer's/deputy's response to your call. All calls (911 and non-emergency) into the Communications Center are recorded. These recordings are held for a set period of time in case they are needed in a later investigation.

How are 9-1-1 calls prioritized?

When your call is received, the information is relayed to the appropriate dispatcher with a priority attached. All calls are prioritized to maximize the safety of the responders and the citizens. Calls received earlier may need to be held in order to have officers/deputies respond to life-threatening incidents. Calls with a higher priority are usually in progress. Some examples of these are: burglaries or robberies in progress, disturbances or domestic violence incidents, use of weapon calls, fire/rescue calls, etc.

What if I accidentally misdial 911?

DO NOT hang up. Instead, inform the dispatcher that you have reached the wrong number. If you do hang up, the Communications Center will call back the number to make sure everything is alright. If there is no answer or a busy signal, a law enforcement officer will be dispatched. This will needlessly take resources away from genuine emergencies.

Why is it important to tell where the incident occurred instead of where I'm calling from?

A 9-1-1 Center can only dispatch agencies belonging to its jurisdiction. Where you are calling from could be in one jurisdiction, and the location in which an incident occurred could be another. The Moore County 911 Communications Center can only dispatch for the law and/or fire and rescue departments we serve.

For example, if you are shopping at a store in Southern Pines and, upon returning to the parking lot, discover that someone had "keyed" your vehicle. Instead of calling the police at that time, you return to your residence in Aberdeen, and call 9-1-1 to report the damage. The dispatcher answering the phone will ask where your vehicle was when the damage occurred. When you

state "in Southern Pines", the dispatcher will have to transfer your call to the Southern Pines Police Department, because Southern Pines Police is not an agency dispatched out of the Moore County 911 Center. In this instance, you may have to return to the Southern Pines city limits to meet with the officer to make a report.

What should I teach my children about 9-1-1?

Many 911 hang-up calls are made by children playing with the telephone. Each time a 911 hang-up call is received, the dispatcher must immediately call back the phone number to determine if there is an emergency. If there is no answer on callback, law enforcement personnel will immediately be dispatched to check the well-being of any persons at the location.

If, on call-back, there is an answer, the dispatcher will question the person (an adult) who answers the phone to determine if an emergency exists. Dispatchers have been trained to "pick up" on any unusual noises or voice inflections to determine if there is a problem at a location without the caller actually advising the dispatcher.

If a child answers the phone on a call-back, the dispatcher will request to speak to an adult to ensure that everything is okay. Some children are too young to understand what we need (give the phone to an adult), so the dispatcher will still send an officer to respond.

We ask that adults do not punish children who call 911 and then hang up, but rather explain to them that 911 should only be used in an emergency. If children are punished for dialing 911, it may scare them from using it in the future, whether they have a legitimate emergency or not. Moore County 9-1-1 Communications also is available to do tours for children (and adults) so they are able to have a better understanding of 911 (call 947-6317).

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